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VOLUME 10 DECEMBER 1960. 35 CENTS NUMBER 10

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AN AMERICAN DANCER'S DEBUT IN KATHAKALI

By VIJAYA JONS

"Clifford Jones, an American dancer studying in India on a Fulbright scholarship, made his first appearance in Kathakali on August 15th during the Independence Day celebration at Kerala Kalamandalam, Cheruthuruthy, the Kathakali school founded by the late Poet Vallathol. Jones is believed to be the first American ever to appear with a Kathakali troupe. He performed 'Pakuti Purappad' with Rajan, an advanced student and performing artist of Kalamandalam. Most of Jones's training in Kathakali has been under Kalamandalam Padmanabhan Nayar Asn."

The above is the opening paragraph of the publicity release to Indian newspapers. A brief summing up of an event which required much work, patience, infinite attention to detail—not only on Kurt's part, but by many others as well, notably his teacher, Padmanabhan Asan. (I will call "Clifford Jones" by his professional name, Kurt Jons, since he is better known as Kurt Jons in the States).

It all started last February when we arrived in the village of Cheruthuruthy in Kerala. A very few days afterward, Kurt began his lessons in Kathakali at Kalamandalam; at the same time I began studying Mohiniyattam at the girls' school of the same institution. At the time, his Fulbright study grant was drawing to a close; he didn't know yet whether he would be awarded a renewal; he had an intense desire to learn at least one small excerpt to be presented in the States. He had decided upon a scene from "Kalyana Saugandhikam"; h would learn Bhima's part and I would attempt to learn the Panchali role—it would be but a fragment, but still it would be something. (This is, of course, a somewhat ridiculous approach to the art of Kathkali. The proper and sensible approach would have been to begin with pure dance and technique—of the body, face, eyes, gestures; then, when the technique had been mastered to some extent, to begin work on a "vesham" or character. However, I fear that Americans studying dance abroad, especially in India, are sometimes forced into the ridiculous approach rather than the sane one for lack of time and money. When it is said that it takes at least six to eight years to learn Kathakali—the course was formerly twelve years—it is absolutely correct.) I also hoped to learn as much of the Mohiniyattam repertoire as possible.

And so we set to work. It was the hot, dry season in Kerala, than which it is hard to imagine anything hotter and dryer. Our muscles ached day after day from stretching and forcing them into

unaccustomed positions, but then we noticed that even long-term students at the school were occasionally having the same trouble; it was said to be from the intense heat. This didn't reduce the pain, but it made us feel that perhaps it was not entirely due to our having been originally trained in ballet, which is completely opposite to Kathakali in every way you can imagine.)

Both of us were overjoyed with our teachers. Chinnammu Amma, the Mohiniyattam teacher and one of the very few left from the old tradition, is in her sixties; in spite of her age, however, she still has a distinctive way of moving that is lovely, but oh, so hard to imitate! She also demonstrates "abhinaya" or facial expression very beautifully, with a mixture of "sringara" (eroticism) and "bhakti" (devotion) which is so necessary to Mohiniyattam, but not at all easy. In short, she has much to give and gives it freely if the pupil can only assimilate it.

Padmanabhan Nayar Asan is a born teacher as well as a gifted performer. He is the son of the late Ramunni Menon, formerly the senior Asan ("guru" or teacher) at Kalamandalam—still well remembered for his complete devotion to Kathakali, the keeper and teacher of a glorious tradition, which he rendered still more glorious. Padmanabhan Asan is well known for his interpretation of Ravana, of the Golden Swan in "Nala Charitam," of Kirmira in "Kirmira Vadham" and many other roles. But besides his obvious qualifications as teacher an dartist, he has a warmth of personality, an ingenuous smile and manner which are most endearing. Like all the Asans at Kalamandalam, he has also a dignity which would make him outstanding anywhere.

We were also falling in love with Kerala. It is so lush and green, the people are so friendly—though inordinately curious about us and everything we do! The whole manner of life here is simplicity itself. We were surprised to find how many "indispensable" things we could get along just as well without. (And then the temple festivals! There was a wonderful one at the temple only a short distance from our house—complete with many elephants, splendid in their gold trappings, torchlight, fantastic drummers and trumpeters and the loudest fireworks we had ever heard! Of course one of the most exciting things about Kerala—to us, anyway—is that you may see a beautiful big tusker calmly walking down the road *any* time!)

> "Jones stated that he and Mrs. Jones are much impressed with the Kerala Kalamandalam—the rigorous and effective teaching methods, the excellent discipline, the intense interest in each student shown by the Asans, and above all with the very high standards of art which are never relaxed."

Another quote from the same source. Indeed, we were impressed. The great tradition of Kathakali is very much alive here and is being passed on only to those boys who are worthy to receive it—possed on with meticulous care, no facet of the art is neglected. But a detailed account of their teaching methods could fill a book so I won't attempt to describe them here.

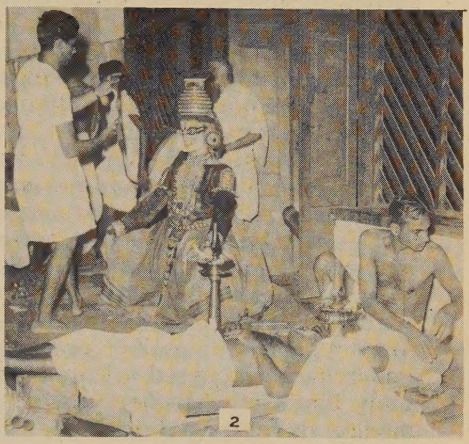
In the meantime we had received the good news that Kurt's grant had been renewed, and we were also making some progress

with our studies. The school is closed for vacation (because of the terribly hot weather) during April and May, but we managed to study during April, and I learned the Panchali role during this time.

In April it was announced that there would be an Anniversary Celebration on May 9th and 10th with two nights of Kathakali, in which almost all of Kerala's most famous stars had been invited to participate. Also the Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs of India, Professor Humayun Kabir, had been invited, as well as the Kerala State Minister for Education, Sri P. P. Ummar Koya. We were looking forward to the whole affair—when the Managing Committee of the school invited us to perform! Perform! Perform what?? They finally conceded that Kurt's three months of study were hardly enough to prepare him to perform a role in Kathakali. But I had been studying Mohiniyattam—surely I could perform "Chollakettu" on the portion of the program which would be presented by the girls' school? Panic-striken at the thought of performing Mohiniyattam with so little preparation and for an audience who probably knew more about it than I did, I said that of course it was impossible. But these Malayalis are persistent! I did finally consent; by that time we were ready to leave on a trip to Tanjore to see two performances of Bhagavata Mela Nataka—another story! —and would return only the day before the performance. Upon our return, completely exhausted from the trip, somehow I did perform, and whether it was the lovely "pujar" (religious ceremony) that began the whole proceeding (with a beautiful elephant, an indispensable part of a Kerala celebration!) which helped me to get through it, at any rate my performance was, I hope, adequate, everyone seemed pleased, and we settled down with a sigh of relief to watch an absloute feast of Kathakali for two whole nights. Incidentally, along with Kurt's "first," I believe I am the first American to study Mohiniyattam and to perform it here.

When school reopened in June, I had a troublesome infection on my foot and was forced to waste the first month. (I tried to console myself by working on my notes and really learning my Mohiniyattam music—I also tried to work on the language, but Malayalam is not just a language, it's a career in itself!) By July I was able to begin work on "Puthana Moksham." How I was able to convince myself that I should learn this difficult Kathakali piece, I hardly know. But once you become interested in Kathakala, it is so fascinating that one thing leads to another.

By this time Kurt had begun work on "Pakuti Purappad." "Purappad" or "Pakuti Purappad" is always done at the beginning of the Kathakali performance. They are items of pure dance. "Pakuti Purappad" is done by two actors (since Kathakali is not considered "dance," the performers are called "actors" rather than "dancers." But if dance is rhythmic and meaningful movement coordinated with music and requiring meticulous training of the body and mind, then Kathakali contains more "dance" than most forms of dance!) One of the actors is dressed as Krishna and the other as Balabhadra, brother of Krishna—in other words they are dressed almost identically, but during the "nokku" (literally "look"; this is when the Kathakali curtain is lowered about halfway for the audience's first glimpse of the performers), Balabhadra holds a minia-



1—Kalamandalam Padmanabhan Nayar Asan applies the first Kathakali makeup on his student, Kurt Jons.

2—The green room at Kalamandalam, final minutes before the performance begins.

3—Makeup and costume are completed.

4—Kurt Jons as Krishna in the "nokku" from "Pakuti Purappad."

ture plough and a mace, while Krishna holds a flute. Both wear the "mudi" (literally "hair," but it is actually a certain type of crown, decorated with much silver and with peacock feathers). The particular kind of mudi which is used here is a replica of the crown worn by Guruvayur Appan, the Vishnu image at a famous temple not far away. ("Pakuti Purappad" was created some years ago at Kalamandalam, the Asans working together on it, and it is influenced by Krishnanattam, a series of dramas performed in temples and telling the life story of Krishna.)

In the middle of July, Kurt began "urichil." This is the special massage done by the Asans, preceded by eye practice and some very vigorous stretching exercises and footwork. But he injured "something" in the ankle and foot, presumably a muscle or tendon—the students do jumps almost at the beginning, and since these jumps occur at about 4:00 A.M. (one hundred jumps, twenty at a time, with about three minutes' rest in between) and since of course they are not ballet jumps, but are very definitely Kathakali jumps in which one is supposed to land on the side of the foot, unless one is really familiar with them and has learned them thoroughly, it is an easy matter to pull or strain a muscle. So after fifteen days, instead of the prescribed thirty, his teacher agreed that perhaps it would be best to discontinue the urichil and go back to concentration on practice and lessons. The urichil in itself, incidentally, is an extremely interesting story—that it, I believe it is interesting to most dancers.

During all this time there had been some occasional talk of Kurt's making an "arangetram" or debut in Kathakali. We always thought of it as being "sometime in the future"—but then we found there was to be a performance on Independence Day, August 15th, and it was deemed to be a suitable time for this debut. It was decided he should perform "Pakuti Purappad"—either "Pakuti Purappad" or "Purappad" is the traditional piece with which the students begin their lives as performers. And so it was agreed, by Kurt, his teacher, Padmanabhan Asan, and the school authorities—the time would be August 15th, the piece "Pakuti Purappad." He would perform it with Rajan, an advanced student, a beautiful and meticulous dancer whose every move seems absolute perfection. Rajan would be a steady and dependable partner who would certainly inspire confidence.

If Kurt thought he had been working hard before, he was in for a shock. It was then we found what Padmanabhan Asan is really made of! When the decision was made it was August 1st. In those two weeks, Kurt was rehearsed and rehearsed again until he could almost have performed "Pakuti Purappad" in his sleep! Now Padmanabhan Asan began working on the small details—the eyes, which must move in a certain way and on a certain beat; the hands; more plie here and there; the feet must strike the floor harder and harder; the body must have a more lyric movement here; the head must be held just so, not tipped too much, else the mudi will fall; the jumps cleaner and higher, careful to come down exactly on the beat, not one split second before or after. A week before the performance (as a concession to the fact that Kurt would be performing after six or seven months' training rather than two years, as is the usual case)

a complete costume, except for the mudi, was brought to the hostel where we are now living. (The mudi and makeup must not be worn before the arangetram, this is traditional.) Each day Padmanabhan Asan dressed Kurt in the complete costume, yard after yard of material used to "stuff" the skirt and make it stand out; all the ornaments; the bells (Kurt's ballet-trained calf muscles gave some trouble here—it was difficult to find bells with strings long enough to go around them since Kathakali bells are worn at the knee, and also since Kathakali dancers develop long muscles rather than thick ones as in ballet.) Then Kurt would go over and over "Pakuti Purappad." One day the two drummers and two singers who would play for the performance came and rehearsed also. In other words, true artist that he is, Padmanabhan Asan left no stone unturned—nothing was too much trouble or too time-consuming, nothing was left to chance. And through it all, he was paitent and even-tempered.

And so the day drew near—Kurt was nervous; he wanted above all things not to disappoint his teacher. I had told him of my feeling when dancing at the Anniversary Celebration—a wonderful sense of not having to "sell" anything to the audience. The whole audience is completely familiar with Mohiniyattan and Kathakali; Kathakali especially they have seen over and over since they were children. There is nothing whatever necessary except to concentrate simply on doing the piece as well as you possibly can. It is a wonderful way to be able to perform and of course the only right way.

And so the day drew near and finally dawned. In the morning Kurt went over the piece several times, each time making mistakes! At 4:00 we walked over to the school. The Kalamandalam students and Cheruthuruthy High School students had just completed an Independence Day procession ending at the school, with drummers and an elephant—a baby one this time and cute as a button.

We found Padmanabhan Asan; he told Kurt that he must wear "nakum," the long silver nails worn on the left hand—but of course

'Whadda ya mean, Waltz? I'm waiting for the Cha Cha!'

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Kurt had none. He was offered some to borrow and finally his teacher selected a set belonging to Adigal, one of the senior artists of the troupe.

At about 5:30, Kurt, Rajan, Padmanabhan Asan go to the green room to begin the long preparations. Kurt's makeup was entirely done by his teacher except for the "chutty" (the white beard-like frame on cheeks and chin made of rice flour and lime), which was applied by Govinda Warrier, the chief makeup artist and teacher of makeup and costuming. It is traditional that the first makeup should be applied by the teacher because the students are not allowed to practice makeup until after the arangetram. The makeup takes several hours; such meticulous care and patience; the face is measured, each line is applied in just the right place, at just the right angle. I sit in a corner of the green room most of the time to watch the proceedings, trying to stay out of the way! Soon I can hear the drummers outside playing the "kelli"—the drumming at sunset which announces the performance. At about the same time, Kurt lies down to have his chutty applied. This takes from one to two hours, during which the actor is supposed to sleep. Kurt dozes a little, but is afraid to sleep too soundly. The chutty is finished, but it cracks at the point near the chin! It is repaired three times before it is satisfactory. In the meantime some of the younger boys are grinding and mixing the colors for the makeup and the other actors come in to begin their preparations.

A tremendous crowd of people are present for the performance. The Ottantullal (another fascinating form of dramatic dance), Mohiniyattam and Bharata Natyam, which precede the Kathakali, are held inside the large hall—this is still the rainy season! It is so crowded that it is impossible to get near enough to the doors or windows to get a glimpse of what is happening. Then the word is passed that the Kathakali will be held outside. Owing to the large crowd, and since it has been fairly dry for a day or two, they have evidently decided to take a chance on the weather.

There is a permanent outdoor stage just outside the green room. It is necessary only to erect a piece of canvas for a room, supported by tall standards of areca nut palm, lower a dark blue backdrop, set up some chairs and all is ready.

One of the older students helps Kurt with the "chundu pu"—the special seeds which are put under the lower lid to turn the whites of the eyes a bright red. His teacher puts the finishing touches to his makeup, and the dressers are now beginning to get him into the costume.

I begin to realize that if I want a seat, I had best see to it. I find a place near the stage, but on the side—this is even better, for I can see everything that goes on behind the Kathakali curtain, the large piece of cloth with different colors in a simple concentric rectangular design, held by two men dressed in the pure white Kerala "mundu." The big Kathakali lamp in downstage center is burning brightly, the curtain is being held just behind it, the musicians begin the preliminary singing and drumming.

"Also making their arangetram on the same occasion were Unny Krishnan, maddalam; Narayanan, chenda; Shankaranara-

yanan and Krishnan Kutty, singers."

Incidentally, one of these boys is a Harijan, from the very lowest caste, and another is a Nambutiri Brahman, from the very highest caste, a good example of the kind of democracy that obtains at least as far as Kathakali is concerned. Little Unny Krishnan is so small he cannot yet hold the heavy maddalam by having it suspended around his waist—he has to rest it on a stool in order to play it. The chenda player also seems too little and slight to manage the big chenda—but both of them, as well as the singers, did a tremendous job, this being their first actual performance.

Now, behind the curtain, while some older music students are singing and drumming, these four boys are giving "dakshina" to their teachers—this is a symbolic gift of cloths or mundus traditionally given on the occasion of the first performance. At the same time, as I learned afterwards, Kurt is giving dakshina to the Asans in the green room. Symbolic gifts of betel leaf and coins are also made. (The instruments are handed from the older music students who began the music, to the teachers, then each teacher himself hands each of the new performers his instrument—the maddalam, the chenda, the cymbal (played by the first singer), and the elatalam (played by the second singer). All of this, of course, without missing a beat of the music.)

Now Rajan and Kurt emerge from the green room. (I am watching anxiously—does he look a little shaky, or calm and collected?) Two of the "petti" men (literally, "box-men," a term which includes the men who look after the packing and unpacking of wardrobe, dressers, curtain men, the men who tend the big Kathakali lamp, etc.) place the stools on which they will stand to hold the canopy for the nokku. Aajan and Kurt, still behind the curtain, at a certain place in the music, begin their "namaskarams." This word means a "bowing movement" or "showing reverence," but in Kathakali denotes a certain set series of movements which are done at the beginning and end of each lesson. There are particular namaskarams which are done before beginning "Purappad"—one touching the floor, another touching the foot and then the crown, and so on. Afterwards, they touch each of the musical instruments and then the crown. They return to their places, ready for the nokku. The conch blows, the canopy is raised, the drumming reaches a pitch, here comes the little man who holds the "alavatam" or discs trimmed with peacock feathers which are held on each side of Krishna's crown during the nokku, and the curtain is lowered halfway to reveal Kurt and Rajan—but no longer reconizably Kurt and Rajan. The green face, black lines, white chutty, rose-red eyes, many gold ornaments, silver crown, "uttarium" (like stoles knotted at the end), and huge skirt, are all designed to completely alter the whole human body, face and personality. The nokku is actually a little dance for the eyes and eyebrows—the eyebrows quiver, the eyes dart back and forth in set rhythms. Kurt as Krishna is showing "sringara" rasa; Rajan as Balabhadra, "vira" or heroic rasa. Kurt is holding the flute, Rajan the miniature plow and the mace. The drumming again reaches a pitch and in one swift movement the curtain is brought up again. The canopy is removed; after more drumming the curtain is again lowered and removed and the piece

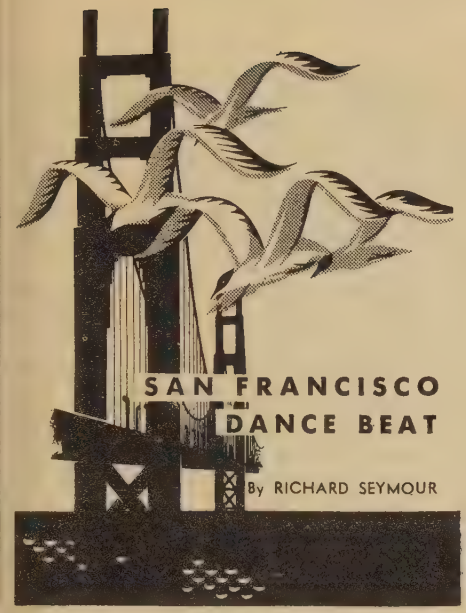
begins, with a slow deep plie (knees out, toes pointing forward!). And so it proceeds—circular movements of the body, "marking time" movements, jumps, the rhythm doubles, then drops back to "vilambitam" or slow, it builds again, finally they reach the last "kalasam" (a certain type of decorative step which separates one section from another), they turn and go off and the drummers are ready to begin their "melappadam"—a long, involved, and most exciting exhibition of drumming.

I am feeling very proud of Kurt, even more so when Balakrishnan Kurup, son of the Poet Vallathol, turns to say, "You would never know that he is not a Malayali." In Kerala this is the highest praise of all for the Malayal's are like the Spanish in this respect. Just as the Spanish firmly believe that no one but a Spaniard can possibly perform Spanish dance, the Malayalis believe that no one but a native son, born and bred in Kerala, can possibly perform Kathakali.

I make my way back to the green room where I find Padmanabhan Asan just outside having a well-deserved cigarette, and find Kurt inside scraping the first layer of makeup off with a piece of palm leaf—evidently the usual way to do it! Finally the makeup is off, we again breathe a sigh of relief and settle down to enjoy a real feast of Kathakali—a full-length performance by the Kalamandalam troupe (which is second to none in Kerala, which is to say in the world) of one of our favorites—"Dakshayagam"!

"He well realizes, he said, that he has made only a small beginning and earnestly hopes to be able in some way to continue his study for the several years which are absolutely necessary to attain some mastery of so difficult an art form."

"Purappad," in fact, means a "going out" or a "beginning." Padmanabhan Asan has prescribed two days of complete rest—and then back to The Schedule. Up at 5:30, one hour and a half of practice before breakfast; another practice session of one or two hours before lunch; a two-hour lesson in the afternoon; and one hour of abhinaya in the evening. Perhaps, if we are able to continue in this way long enough, we can learn something of this art of Kathakali!



"The Dance": From Ritual to Rock and Roll—Ballet to Ballroom. By Joost A. M. Meerloo. 152 pp. Philadelphia: Chilton. $4.95.

This is a handsomely put-together volume of interest to students of the dance in all its aspects. Beautifully illustrated with 100 photographs, paintings and drawings, "The Dance" traces the history of human movement from the ancient to the present rock n' roll craze and offers provocative analysis of sociological, psychological and artistic aspects of dancing. Dr. Meerloo's comments delve perhaps a bit too deeply into strictly scientific areas of consideration for his book to be of fascination for readers solely interested in dance from the recreation or stage performance viewpoint, but any who take a more than surface interest in dancing — especially teachers, students, performers and other professionals — will find the book a bright and valuable addition to their library.

Essentially a picture book with clearly stated, concise and scholarly textual references for all illustrations plus some 40 pages of introductory text, Dr. Meerloo's book shows dance in all its forms. The reader is even treated to an admirable variety and number of photographs of non-human endeavor in dance. "Dance of the Atoms," "Frantic Mass Behaviour Among Ants," and "Dance of Wooing Birds" are a few of the specimens of this fascinating aspect of the book's coverage. As an added illustration of the book's area of inquiry

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here are some of the headings of the short chapters in the introductory text: Everything is Rhythm, The Nirvanic Dance, The Milk Dance, Syncopated Rapture, Dance as Social and Ethereal Ritual. Meerloo investigates these and other significant uses of dance frankly and with an eloquent frame of reference. The author displays a sincere interest in his subject throughout, although at times (as when misspelling Isadora's name, i.e. "Isidora") he shows a less than perfect knowledge of the dance-art field. This large (10x7") volume is ideal for gifts.

• The August 12-15 visit at the Opera House by the delightful Royal Danish Ballet was as successful as the unfortunate circumstances under which the company toiled would allow. The shortness of the Dane's stay here was one grievous mistake, another was lack of suitable amount of appearances by major soloists and the last—but not least horrifying bungle—was the atrociously misguided choice of repertoire for the group's stay here. No classic ballets or works in a modern idiom were offered; just romantic ballets. All but one work, Ashton's superb "Romeo and Juliet," were from 100 to 175 years old. They were "Whims of Cupid," "Conservatory," a wonderful "La Sylphide" and the deservedly popular "Napoli" Act III. But no Balanchine, Petit, Cullberg or any other work in a contemporary mode.

Ashton's supremely beautiful beautiful and workmanlike handling of "Romeo and Juliet" did give us an offering by a contemporary, but his ballet is cast in the romantic idiom. The Danes do of course excell in romantic ballet with its stress on acting, subtle virtuosity, lightness of execution and story line considerations. However they are a company of marvelously trained artists and a display of their talents in a "Serenade," "Carmen" or "Miss Julie" would have been highly enjoyable.

Regretably, Margrethe Schanne appeared in only one ballet, "La Sylphide." Mona Vangsaa appeared twice, but in the same work, "Romeo and Juliet," and the splendid Fredbjorn Bjornson had only one opportunity to be seen in a role worthy of his virtuoso gifts.

What the company danced, though, was admirable. Vangsaa's elegant, articulate and perfectly finished extensions and attitudes and arabesques; Henning Kronstam's noble partnering, handsome appearance and clean technique; Kirsten Ralov's wonderfully musical step phrasing and vivacious interpretations, and fine artistry by Verner Andersen, Flemming Flindt, Kirsten Petersen, Ole Fatum, Jorn Madsen and Solveig Ostergaard made the Dane's visit very worthwhile even though the company's real artistic merit was not realized as fully as local audiences might have wished.

• Three modern dance performances offering a variety of styles were given during late summer. Welland Lathrop's group at San Francisco State College, on August 19, Ann Halprin's Dancers Workshop of Marin at the Halprin Outdoor Theatre in Kent Woodlands on July 30 (also a demonstration for U.C.'s "S. F. Renaissance" series at the San Francisco Extension July 23) and the Contemporary Dancers' programs at their Center, September 20, 30 and October 1.

The Halprin concert was a riotous display in the free-wheeling genre that Miss Halprin has devised and perfected. "Flowerburger" was the featured work and was danced by Miss Halprin, A. A. Leath and John Graham. It was hilarious and as hectic as the title might imply. Based on three poems of Richard Brautigan, this new piece was a delightful showcase for the ideas and creative horseplay of the Halprin group. The motivation for this type of work is abvious and naive, but it is performed with such compelling and intense dancing that one HAS to enjoy and find valuable what has been witnessed. The dancers bring such a wealth of technical virtuosity, humor, artistic purity and *intuitive* spirit to the flaccid, intelectually triggered trash which their vehicles and "idea of dance" are, that even the most confused and "soiled linen" works they do are masterworks of a sort. If the group would let their intuition guide them, as they do when involved in their magnificent step-by-step interpretation, when choosing a "vehicle," "style" or "approach" they would have the kind of dance of which their huge talents are worthy.

The creation of the group seems too much dictated to by their muddled intellectual reaction to the things most of us who are aware fear nowadays: conformance, stodginess, sham, artistic middleclassness, the chilling dependence on literal ideas, verbal interpretations for everything, and choking of the intuitive force by misuse of the intellect. We can protect ourselves from being immediately harmed by these things through reaction, but only *action*—artistic action—will enable us to confront and defeat these destructive qualities. The Halprin group, although I'm sure these dancers wouldn't think so, ironically manifests the exact qualities they are reacting to. The manifestations

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are not always obvious and most are insidiously subtle and dwell within the hollow center core that one senses when experiencing a work by this group.

This little company is potentially one of the two or three greatest in modern dance in this country. Given the right track to run along Miss Halprin would be the greatest creative force, both as a dancer and choreographer, in the country (and this evaluation includes the fabulously gifted and equally confused Merce Cunningham). A. A. Leath is an exceptionally fine artist and perhaps the finest male modern dancer in America as far as technique goes. I have never seen a better male solo interpretation of a modern dance piece than Mr. Leath's magnificent "Earth Interval," a work, unfortunately, he does not seem to perform lately. John Graham is John Graham and nothing more (except of course for the artistic direction I've intimated) could be asked of a dancer-actor-mime-"living prop"-elocutionist, all of which Graham is. Wonderful!

Now all these artists, plus admirably talented comers-and-goers (currently Sandra Peizer and Lisa Straus), belong to the Halprin company. A real embarrassment of riches. How wonderful if the group could make true use of themselves rather than allowing their misguided muscles to conspicuously consume and waste their great artistic gifts.

The group also performed three programs November 29-30 and December 1 at the Contemporary Dancers Center. A review will appear here next issue.

• Welland Lathrop's company premiered "Magic Play" and revived "Minstrel Show" for a big audience at San Francisco State College August 19. Also on the program were Lathrops beautiful solo "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," "White Writing," a masterful abstract construction premiered last year; "Lamentation," and the comedy medley "Dreams for a Summer Night."

"Magic Play," was set to music of Lou Harrison and was danced by Tak Yamamoto, with Gail Barnard, Joan Leighs, Gail Randall, Shirley Mordine, Katherine Salis and Joan Wolf. It is a delicately etched lyric work with beautiful, simply projected emotional qualities. Although the work has Lathrop's usual superb control of technical aspects and the structure of the piece is classicly clear and unmuddled, the emotion and expressiveness of "Magic Play" seem effete and drugged.

Lathrop always gives us this meaningful, simply natural outer form, but in "Magic Play" no inner content of any vigor. As a rose, say, is simple on the outside yet has a "content" of the most intense sort —vital, alive, meaningfully beautiful—so an art work should have a powerfully, beautifully stated content which is expressed very simply. "Magic Play" is as "easy" in content, which is wrong, as it is easy in outward form, which is right. Its expressive inner core, its spiritual armature, seems only to match the artistically desirable simplicity of outward form rather than potently backing this outer grace and ease with solid—and ironically—"spiritually complex" content.

"Minstrel Show" ended the program on a satirical note by lampooning everything in sight. Its outlandishness and old-school approach to comedy did more to puncture the balloons in season than did the more literal suggestions of the piece. When the dancers "told" you how ridiculous and frail such-and-such was you couldn't get too enthused, but when they "showed" you, Minstrel Show

took on more valuable and much funnier dimensions. The dancers in this were wonderful, as they were in "Dreams for a Summer Night" even though badgered all evening by mis-timing and unexplained jitters. Several of the dancers are new to the group and are first-rate dancers as well as being unusually fine and warm personalities.

• "Yerma," "Oracle of the Branch" and a premiere, "Opus Jazz," were shown by the Contemporary Dancers at their Center September 29-30 and October 1.

"Opus Jazz" is a three part work in progress for the Dancers' 1961 international tour and the initial J Marks work for the company in a jazz idiom. Except for "Boogie," a section from "Like Let's Split," part three of the work. wonderfully danced by Marks in a rare stage appearance, none of "Opus Jazz" came off very well. The group is not—as it is aware—too much in tune with a form of dance as "upbeat" and light as jazz inspired choreography. The Dancers are of the "hand-wringing" persuasion of dance as opposed to the "hopity-hop" school.

The opening section of the new work, "Street Scene," had some good movements, but not enough. It was too self-consciously constructed to have the freedom needed for either jazz themes or any dance piece. The dancers also were rather ill at ease and only sporadically communicated any feeling. "Ebony Concerto" has been seen before. It only manages to accompany Stravinsky's music and fails to interest by movement.

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"Yerma" was given a polished performance, which it deserves, being one of the best works in the group's repertoire. Jean Mathis was magnificent in her interpretation and she danced beautifully. The line of her head and shoulders was never anything less than perfect beauty. She has outstanding control of her whole body and to watch her is an esthetic and artistic joy. James Croshaw, Kirk Michaels, Diana Russell and Tchouky Mattei were the other dancers.

James Croshaw's solo "Oracle of the Branch" is ideally suited to his talents and he dances the piece beautifully. It is doubtful whether another dancer could do the work so much justice as it depends so much on purity of motivation for the movement. Croshaw allows nothing to get between his stimulation and his projection. The piece thus achieves a serene and simple lyric statement.

• "The Royal Ballet" is an excellent color film by Dr. Paul Czinner of three specimens of that company's repertoire and the unmatched art of Margot Fonteyn. "Swan Lake" act II selections, for practical dance purposes all of "Firebird" and all except some 15 minutes of the remarkable "Ondine" are feautred in the film. Czinner has used a "straight" technique for shooting and the results are faithful and byand-large, very admirable. The "Swan Lake" suffers to some considerable degree from flatness. "Firebird" shows Fonteyn in one of her great roles and close-ups allow the viewer an excellent opportunity to observe her masterly characterization of the role. No high jetes, frenetic speed of execution or false reliance upon the other virtuoso devices of classic ballet (which are used by the untalented ballerina solely as a brilliant crutch for her creative failings rather than for the reason they were intended) are needed by Fonteyn. Her Firebird has real fire to it and she makes you believe it. Her taste is impeccable and so we get a magic bird that can really dumfound and supernaturally divert forces of evil. A dancer like Maria Tallchief or Melissa Hayden, admirable, exciting and technically excellent as they are, could never strike one dumb, or with a glance of magnificent eyes and by invoking a dancer's *total* resources, spell-

(Continued on page 24)

THE GREATEST CLOWNS IN HISTORY

Skid on a banana peel . . . make a face that launches your kids on a gale of giggles . . . tell a joke that lays them in the aisles at the service club convention—and you've joined the company of famous clowns that have made the world laugh.

Comedian Steve Allen in his book "The Funny Men" observes that humor hasn't changed much since the days that Durante and Jackson were doing five-a-day in vaudeville and Mabel Norman described a perfect arc in hitting Ben Gilpin's puss with the first thrown custard pie.

Audiences still roar when a starving Charlie Chaplin boils his shoes in "The Gold Rush" and eats them with salt and pepper. They squeal with delight when madcap Danny Kaye goes into nonsense-syllable orbit with a "git gat gittle de geep peep gloopty gloom and fiddle de roop" barrage—a throwback to the rowdy choruses of ancient Greek comics at the feasts of Dionysus. And the small-fry howl at circus hobo Emmett Kelley in his battered derby hat and floppy shoes, as he tries to crack a nut with a 40-pound sledgehammer and ends up wistfully with a little powder—but he's only demonstrating an art of pantomime founded by the Italian Commedia Dell' Arte in the 16th century.

The Man Behind the Mask

"Be a clown, be a clown," goes the popular song, but those who make their living at it can be very serious men. Phil Silvers, who is the picture of bouncy mirth as TV's Sergeant Bilko, in private life is a worry wart.

Danny Kaye, a whirling dervish of joy on stage, is at heart a quiet introvert who devotes much of his life to such important causes as the United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund. Fred Allen, regarded by his colleagues as our modern answer to Mark Twain, in his leisure hours quietly spread his earnings among friends down on their luck and never mentioned his deeds.

Great Moments

One of the biggest clowns in the history of American entertainment was also one of the smallest. Tom Thumb, all three-feet, two inches of him, was one of P. T. Barnum's major drawing cards, and he drew a crowd of more than 1,000 persons when he was married in Grace Church, New York City, in 1863.

One of the driest of our nation's buffoons, W. C. Fields was also one of the wettest. As an Atlantic City stunt man in his early years, he used to swim out and "drown" 12 times a day for a gawking public. "I never took a drink of water after that," Fields remarked in his inimitable drawl. "I didn't need to. I had it stored up like a camel."

Great moments in humor have got to include the time that Harry Houdini told an audience that he could thread several needles in his

(Continued on page 23)

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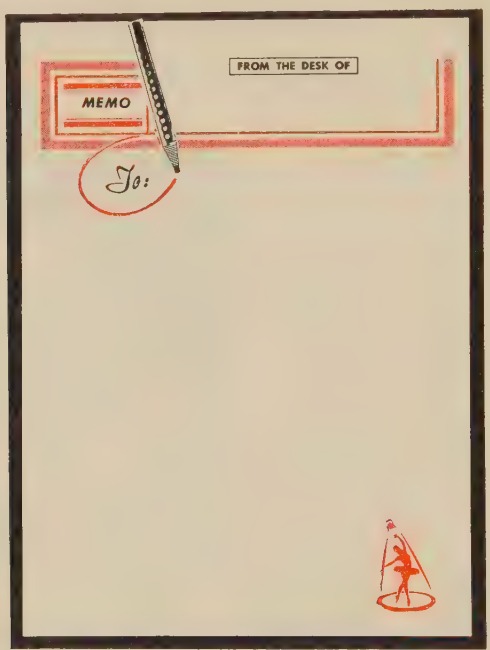

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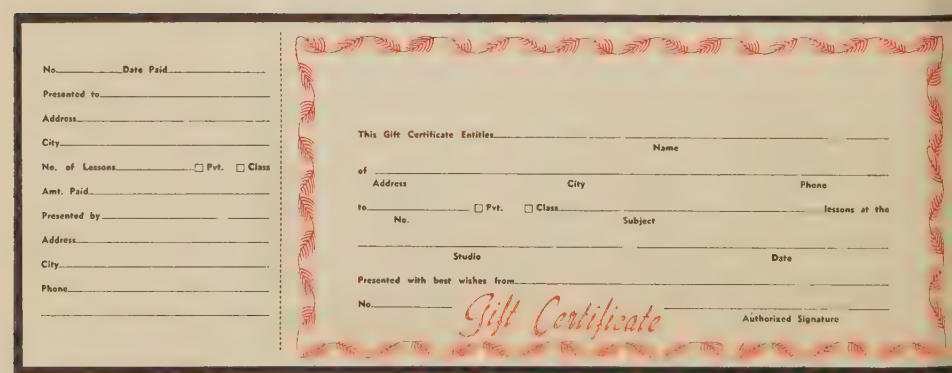

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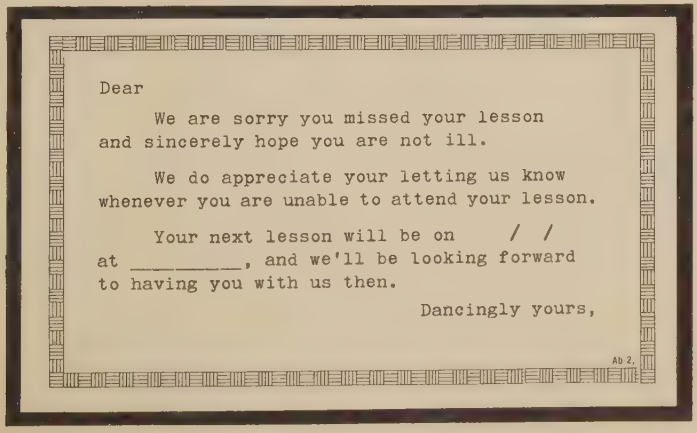
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mouth. He asked for a volunteer to testify that he had nothing in his mouth to abet the trick. A small man trotted on stage and obligingly stared into Houdini's mouth. "Speak up," the great magician said, "and tell the audience what you see." "Pyorrhea," said the little man and the audience howled. The man had been in the theatre without his greasepaint mustache. Houdini discovered that he had picked out Groucho Marx from an audience of 1,600 people.

Danny Kaye has "shook up" many audiences in his career, but there was that January 18, 1953 night in San Francisco when Kaye was shook up himself, but good. This great performer of mercurial moods suddenly interrupted a routine, lit a cigarette and walked to the footlights. "You people are too sensitive," he told the audience. "Whenever anyone refers to your city as Frisco, it upsets you. Now why should you resent that? I think it's because you're insecure." Suddenly the theatre shuddered and the huge candelabra swayed. The city was in the throes of one of its worst earthquakes in years. Kaye took another puff on his cigarette and said, "I guess we're all insecure. Now let's see—where did I leave off?" And he went back into his act.

The acknowledged clown prince of pantomimists, Kaye is a Russian opera singer wiht an allergy one minute, a Swiss yodeler with the hiccups the next, and then a Spanish dancer with a sore foot. His inexhaustible genius receives another airing on October 30 over CBS-TV, when he will star in a huge General Motors Corporation spectacular.

Danny has a sure remedy for swell-headedness. "Whenever I suspect I'm acting important," he asserts, "I do an imitation of myself for myself. That makes me feel clean again."

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The Future Clowns

George Burns, Jack Benny, and others have lamented the demise of vaudeville as a training ground for tlaent. Where are the new comedians coming from, they ask? The answer may well be, they're already here. TV has been a showcase for such bright young stars as Jonathan Winters, Art Carney, and Wayne and Schuster. One of the big problems for young entertainers is over-, rather than under-exposure. Television consumes material at a fierce rate. Red Skelton reveals that in a few months on TV he ran out of 165 sketches it had taken him years to develop. But there was one sketch he had to drop not because of TV, but due to calories! In his famous vaudeville doughnut bit, he played the part of the "sneaky dunker" five times a day. That added up to consuming about 40 doughnuts a day, and doctor's orders put a stop to it. But Red went on to develop those zany characters, Clem Cadiddlehopper and Cauliflower McPug, who proved to be just what the doctor ordered!

bind and disintigrate all. Perhaps no dancer can do this, not even Fonteyn. But Fonteyn's "Firebird" *can* do it and does.

Frederick Ashton's "Ondine" gives Fonteyn her greatest role. With the recording of this work Czinner's film becomes a very significant permanent document. The filmization of the work has been extremely well done (I say this even after having just seen the superb balletic piece performed by the company on-stage at the San Francisco Opera House). In some ways one has a better opportunity to enjoy certain segments of "Ondine" in the filmed version. That great choreographic masterstroke of Ashton's, the act I, scene I "shadow" passage, for instance, can be more easily appreciated via the camera eye which looks down on Ondine's shadow as it is cast on the floor of the stage. At the Opera House the shadow was not visible at all from the front of the orchestra and even from the main floor rear of the house was just barely visible. The entire company has done a tremendous job in staging the work. Czinner in recording it with sensitivity and fidelity and Ashton in creating it. It is a great work without Margot Fonteyn dancing it (seeing Beriosova dance it her first time at the Opera House proves this). *With* Fonteyn "Ondine," whether on film or stage, is simply unbelievable. It is the greatest balletic role I have ever seen. Before "Ondine" I would have said perhaps Ulanova's "Giselle" or "Romeo and Juliet," or Nora Kaye's "Pillar of Fire" or "The Cage," or Fonteyn's own creation of Aurora, etc., was the greatest. Now the best of these great interpretations must come second to Fonteyn's matchless "Ondine." We are very fortunate in having Czin-

Jim and Olive Cullip, undefeated British and European Ballroom Champions, gave a beautiful demonstration of Modern Ballroom Dancing on ABC-TV's "Let's Dance" show. Al Jarvis quite rightly introduced them, and here I am quoting verbatim, as: "two of the greatest dancers in the world, dancing on our show." Wednesday, Nov. 9, 1960. —Photo by W. K. Plachta

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DANCE NOTES

• Leon Kalimos of the San Francisco Ballet reports in a card from Madrid that "interest in having the company come to Europe is great." The company's annual Opera House Christmas season offers "Beauty and the Beast" December 17 and 18 and the traditional "Nutcracker" December 24, 26, 27, 28 and 29. The Royal Ballet opening benefited the company's 1961 Spring season. The group dances various works at the Oakland Auditorium on December 2 to initiate a series there. Mike Smuin's ballet "Gold Rush" was presented by the company at the opera Fol de Rol in October. The Balanchine-Christensen work to Glazunoff music, "Variations de Ballet," was done by the company for the S. F. Opera season on a double bill shared with "La Sonambula" October 11 and 13. Sally Bailey, Jocelyn Vollmar and Roderick Drew were the soloists. "Con Amore" was presented at Opera Guild Student Matinees along with "Gianni Schicchi" October 18, 25-26.

• James Graham-Lujan conducted a U.C. Extension class in "History of Ballet" at the S.F. Center. Fiona Fuerstner of S.F. Ballet demonstrated technique.

• Hindu dancer Shivarum had a October 22 performance at Segei Temoff's dance studio. . . Moss and Hayman Attractions brought in the Don Cossack Chorus and Dancers November 5 to Nourse Auditorium and November 25 have the Caledonia Scotch Singers and Dancers there.

• Spencer Barefoot presented Escudero and troupe in their "farewell" tour performance at the Opera House October 29. Program will be reviewed next issue. . . The Contemporary Dancers and the University of California both showed a series of dance films in September-October. The newly formed Pacific Ballet Company under the direction of Alan Howard, former Ballet Russe soloist now directing the Academy of Ballet here, had a performance at Cappuchino High School in San Bruno November 18. . . Royal Ballet had a heavy turn-out November 4-13 season at the Opera House.

NEW YORK dance report

by D.N.S.-Russell

• Charles Weidman gave a Master Class Nov. 10 at the International Dance School in NYC, studio 819, Carnegie Hall . . . Joseph Levinoff, on the staff of the same school, has been invited to teach a series of Master Classes for Intermediate and Adult Students in the Baltimore area for the Ballet Workshop Committee headed by Shirley S. Selis and Reha M. London . . . The school's jazz teacher, Frank Wagner, staged the new Upstairs at the Downstairs plush duplex nightclub floor show which runs thru the winter season . . . His wife Marsha has joined Michael Kidd's "Wildcat" cast . . . Vitale Fokine is teaching at the Andre Eglevsky School in Massapequa, L.I. . . . his cousin Leon, nephew of the late Michael, flew to Russia as ballet master with the Alicia Alonzo company with wife Gloria among the dancers . . . Irene Fokine shared a Sunday matinee program with Leticia Jay at the 92nd St. "Y" Nov. 6, and a second program in the evening at the Sigh School of Fashion Industries with students of her own Ridgewood, N.J. school and of her mother's Alexander Fedorova Fokine studio in NYC. . . .

• The concert at the High School of Fashion Industries presented the Irine Fokine Ballet Company to good advantage among Mme. Fedorova's own students. High point of the evening was a "Bacchanale" ballot to music by Glazounoff, choreo. by Irine Fokine, featuring Alonso Castro as guest with Elyn Tia and a well-trained corps of advanced students including Dorothy Doll, Patricia Wilkins, Nina Decker, and several others too numerous to list. Edwina Andreuzzi was Mme. Fedorova's exciting student, demonstrating poise, musicality, and a quality of depth worthy of note in a child of 16. Among other soloists were Helen Whittaker, Douglas McKenna, Don Mark and dancers already named from "Bacchanale." Outstanding in the tiny tot age group was a fascinating and talented child called Susan Burton, whose reverence at the end of one number brought down the house by its grace and poise, drawing five encores . . .

• Valentina Litvinoff has moved her studio to 149 Bleecker Street, the old premises at 13th Street having been demolished . . . Her famous dance floor at the old studio is being replaced at the new with "a lovely, resilient maple floor which will surpass the old one" and is being made subject of a special article in Dance Magazine .

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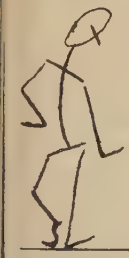

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Miss Litvinoff hosted dancers and press at a house-warming Sept. 18 . . . S. Hurok has announced that Anton Dolin will make his first American lecture tour next October and November on two topics, "The Russian Ballet Under Diaghilev" and "Ballet in Britain." . . . Nelle Fisher showed her "Littlest Circus" to a special impresario audience at the 41st St. Theatre Oct. 21 . . . A new Theatrical trade newspaper, "Backstage," is due on the newsstands Dec. 1, with a special weekly dance section edited by your columnist . . . Dancers and choreographers will contribute guest columns, including Anna Paulina, in the first issue . . . Donald McKayle guest teaches until Christmas at Bennington College in Vermont . . . Bob Haddad and David Harris shared choreo. honors at a Nov. 13 concert at the 92nd St. "Y" . . . Bob Hamilton's Motorama industrial, for which he did the choreography, reopens in San Francisco Jan. 5 and in Los Angeles Feb. 5, after playing the Waldorf Astoria in NYC the week of Nov. 3 . . . Hamilton flies on a hurried visit to the Coast for the event . . .

• Elna Laun, Sandra Devlin and Jack Beaber are choreographers for "Choreography IV," a program which was scheduled for two performances Nov. 27 at Kaufman Concert Hall, 92nd Street YM-YWHA. Principal dancers were to include Virginia Barnes, Ellen Martin and Sheldon Ossosky plus 32 others, including choreo. Beaber's bride Susan Cansino. Original music was to feature works by Forrest Wood and Victor Zisflin, wit hcostume credits to Peter St. Joseph and lighting by Clergue Jones . . . In conjunction with a special dance exhibition showing through Dec. 23 at Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum at Columbia University, a meeting was held Nov. 18 to discuss "Dance in America." Speakers invited were Lillian Moore and Alwin Nikolais. The exhibit presents more than 500 pictures of dancers and their productions ranging over about a century and-a-half including displays of ballet and modern dance

domestic and foreign visiting. Fred Fehl and Martha Swope have photos on exhibit along with David S. Berlin's picture essay of Henry Street Dance Co. and about 150 photos and prints of nineteenth-century dancers . . .

• France's former Paris Opera prima ballerina, Micheline Bardin, who has appeared as a vocalist at the Viennese Lantern on visits to the U.S. and guested once for Arlene Francis on TV doing jazz and cancan numbers, has signed with Leland Records Co. in Canada to do three LP record albums for distribution there and here. The albums will respectively feature famous children's songs, best songs of the movies and American songs of tomorrow (hit predictions), all translated into French . . . Emily Frankel & Co. tested new repertoire at Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., Nov. 10th . . . Frankel's new night club act partner is Terrence Miller . . . The December issue of Musical America is a special dance issue featuring an interview by newly appointed editor Robert Sabin with S. Hurok on an impresario's job, a picture spread on Broadway dance events and a special article by yours truly on dance in television . . .

Dancer-choreographer-costumer Anna Paulina has withdrawn from a scheduled concert with Socrates Birsky and joined the cast of a "brigadoon" production choreographed by Jack Beaber for two City of Hope Charity performances Dec. 2 and 3. Paulina dances and sings the role of Maggie Anderson in the musical, also is doing more costumes for Pat Newhall, whose off-B'way "Shakuntala" she dressed last season. The new Newhall off-B'way offering is "King of the Dark Chamber," which she presents in conjunction with Krishna Shaw in mid-December, with choreography again by Bhaskar . . . Bhaskar will also be among choreos. for Ballet Arts Theatre's 20th anniversary concert Dec. 17 and 18 at the High School of Art and Design in mid-town NYC . . . Works presented will include those of Yeichi Nimura, Vladimir Dokoudovsky and possibly some choreography by Bambi Linn. Nimura's "Tropic Etude," last seen at Jacob's Pillow this summer, will feature Dean Crane, Nira Paaz and Jose Guttierez, and Crane and Veronika Mlakar will dance a Nimura pas de deux. A group of girls and two male soloists will perform a third and new Nimura work to a Saint-Saens concerto . . .

• Frank Westbrook returned to NYC from staging a Studebaker industrial on a tour of Atlantic City, Chicago, New Orleans and San Francisco . . . Ted Cappy may choreograph next year's Jones Beach spectacular, which according to the Jones Beach Marine Theatre will almost surely feature dancing with emphasis on a Hawaiian theme . . . Present books under consideration for the musical are "Hawaiian Paradise," by Carmen Lombardo and John Loeb (who did the former "Arabian Nights"), or an old musical of the 1930s by Sigmund Romberg, set in the Hawaiian atmosphere . . . Ted Cappy meanwhile opened a nine-people revue, "Turn Back the Clock," for a run at the Bradford Roof Hoeel in Boston which began Nov. 7 . . . The show then goes on tour under USO for five weeks weeks in Germany, France and England, but without choreo. Cappy . . . Danny Daniels is rehearsing Michael Diminico in his own solo role

TERPSICHOREAN TID-BITS

William D'Albrew

HOMER SAID, "Dancing is the sweetest and most perfect of human enjoyments."

* * * *

WELCOME ADVICE (A paragraph from an old book on dance etiquette):

"A dance is supposed to amuse, and nothing is more out of place than a gloomy scowl, unless it be an ill-tempered frown. The gaiety of the dance is more to be desired than the accuracy of its figures, and if you feel none yourself, you may at least look pleased by that around you."

* * * *

HARD TO BELIEVE

CLAIRE BOOTH LUCE, former Ambassador to Italy, enjoyed one of the most fabulous and unpredictable careers in the history of American women. To touch upon just a small part of her theatrical background, she studied dancing at the Dennishawn School in New York. Her first appearance before the public as a dancer was with the late Texas Guinan's troupe of dancers in the Roaring '20s. Her first appearance on a regular stage was in 1925 in "Little Jessie James." She was co-starred in several revues and plays in this country and Europe.

In 1932 she became Fred Astaire's dance partner, starring in "The Gay Divorcee," a role which gave her the distinction of being his first partner after his sister, Adele, married and retired from the theater. In commenting on her performance in the Ziegfield Follies of 1927, the show business trade paper, "Variety," came out with a dilly. Not being able to predict that she was destined to attain one of this nation's highest honors, the reviewer stated, "Claire Luce, prancing across the stage riding a live ostrich, which wore a rhinestone collar—a typical Ziegfield touch." Tch! Tch!

* * * *

FROM DANCER TO DESIGNER

DON LOPER, famous Beverly Hills designer who still creates Ginger Rogers' beautiful gowns for her television performances, was an exhibition ballroom dancer. During his career as a dancer one of his partners was Gypsy Rose Lee's sister, June Havoc.

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for his tap dance concerto for touring dates . . . Diminico was a featured dancer in the last "New Faces" . . . Michael Terrace and partner Elita Cleveland perform Nov. thru Dec. aboard the Holland-American Line Straterdam on cruise to Nassau and Port-au-Prince, Haiti . . .

the DANCE in NEW YORK

a series of reviews

by Bill Hooks

Robert Du Mee and Company
Shirley Broughton & Company, Guest Artists
Kaufman Concert Hall
October 23, 1960

Robert Du Mee presented his first New York concert in a modest and simple fashion. However, even in a first showing there must be some spark beyond these commendable adjectives. In essence Mr. Du Mee ventured naught and the results proved the same.

In *Apollonian Concerto* one had the initial feeling that some modern Greek-like nobility of movement might be evoked, but all too soon the whole affair moved into classroom exercises not too cleverly pasted tgether. Little more can be said of *The 3 E's of Man.* It suffered virtually the same lack of daring, staying always within the bounds of elementary movement patterns. Those assisting Mr.

Jill Taft, Edilio Ferraro, Marvin Gordon, Judith Chazin of the Gordon Concert Ballet.
—Bill Schropp

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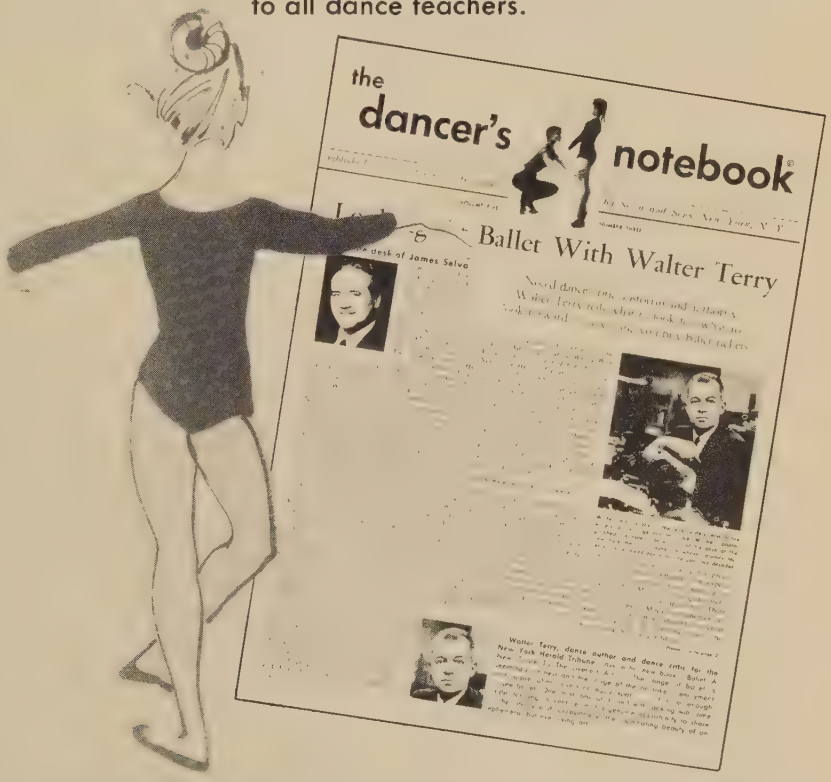

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Du Mee were Sue Hawkes, Rebecca Oliver, John Lankston, Walter Stratton and Frinda.

The Shirley Broughton company presented *Parlour Game*, previously reviewed in these columns. This tight, well constructed little melodrama of an aging actress proved once again an exciting vehicle for Miss Broughton. She was well supported by Lois Rosner, Danny Joel and Robert De Mee.

Miss Broughton presented a new work called *Etudes*. Really a four-part study in movement exercises—it harked back to earlier works by Miss Broughton where her highly athletic style was at its best. Louanna Gardner was especially impressive in the ballet.

Also on the program was a rather cryptic dance by Danny Joel, *The Moth*. It was difficult indeed to determine who was mad at who and why the moth was concerned at all, but here again Louanna Gardner illumined the stage with a personal magnetism—a rare gift which enables her as a performer to glow regardless of the restrictive ness of the work in which she is involved. Shirley Broughton, Lois Rosner and Danny Joel completed the cast of *The Moth*.

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
CITY CENTER
FALL SEASON, 1960

New York's beloved resident company has opened again at its home base, The City Center, and the town has with it a long and varied season of fine ballet. The principal novelty of the early part of the season is *The Figure In The Carpet*, which will be the subject of this review.

The Figure In The Carpet was created in honor of the Fourth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archeology. In keeping with the spirit of Iranian art the oriental carpet was selected by George Balanchine as the springboard for this extravagant and lush ballet. Such opulence has rarely been seen in the repertory of the New York City Ballet. The costumes, scenery and lighting designed by Esteban Frances are a festival for the eye. In addition the ballet is studded with a wealth of ballerinas and soloists. Yet, for the most part the work is dull and flat.

Perhaps the one truly creative section of this long work comes at the beginning in hte "Sands of The Desert." Here Mr. Balanchine has set a large group dance for the female corps de ballet which is genuinely inventive. The waves of dancers drifting in, swirling, subsiding, shifting and gently undulating caught a marvelous feeling of the desert sand. Floating in and out of these groupings was the lovely soloist, Violette Verdy, making a tracery through space as beautiful as the arabesques of a Persian carpet.

From this point onward the ballet took a less inventive turn. However, the second scene, "The Weaving of The Carpet," still held to the thread of the excellent beginning. An intricate interaction of ribbons gave a rather clever dance interpretation of the weaving process.

Part III, called "The Building of the Palace," proved only a

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typical third act series of divertisements—basically the same type which were so much the vogue of the old fashioned full evening ballets of the 19th century. With the exception of the Scottish and Chinese variations they were all rather tedious.

In the Scottish dance Diana Adams, accompanied by four Lairds, beguiled the audience in a clever highland reel with just the mildest hint of comic overtones. The whole variation was a bright adornment to the already over-decorated ballet. The same comic overtones, but somewhat less subtle, pervaded the Chinese divertisement. Nicholas Magallanes was a marvelous funny Chinese duke who found too many court ladies on his hands.

Unfortunately the Grand Pas de Deux by the Prince and Princess of Persia, Melissa Hayden and Jonathan Watts, which should have brought the palace proceedings to a polished finish, was so ill devised choreographically that it seemed like an all too long anti-climax.

But let it be emphasized in closing that such care and attention to the production side of a ballet by the City Center was greatly appreciated by all and it is hoped that other works can be given such extravagant mounting with perhaps the chance of better choreographic settings.

GORDON CONCERT BALLET
RON MURRAY AND COMPANY, Guest Artists
Stuyvesant High School Auditorium
October 22nd and 23rd, 1960

The Gordon Concert Ballet, directed by Marvin Gordon, presented a highly exciting program of provocative new works. It was a pleasure to see something creative on the current dance scene which was solidly based on the wealth of our dance heritage and at the same time extended beyond the present level of existing

choreographic efforts. The whole dance scene has been so willfully "way out" of late that it has begun to appear that the past has no bearing on the present, that any relation to dance as it solidly advanced through the ages to this time is to be avoided at all costs. What a pity that such perversity should pervade the dance art in our day—which brings us back to my point of gladness in seeing genuinely creative work being done today by a youthful choreographer who feels no need to deny the past or be bound by it. Such a person is Marvin Gordon.

Of his three ballets *Triptych* was the closest in lineage to classical abstract dance. Its formal opening seemed a most harmonious complement to the measured grace of the Vivaldi music. The three couples, Oldyna Dynowska and Terence Miller, Marian Horosko and Marvin Gordon, Judith Chazin and Howard Sayette, all brought an elegance of style to the piece that was refreshing. The second section gave Oldyna Dynowska a chance to demonstrate her unique ability at creating a mood even within the confines of an abstract dance. She brought a bittersweet quality tinged with sadness to the work which was subtly poignant. The third section of the ballet was an exciting romp, albeit restrained and still elegant, full of breathtaking lifts and striking adagio passages. The beautiful costimes were by Terence Miller.

Moving into the modern balletic style, Mr. Gordon premiered a work entitled *Once Upon A Time*. Here he undertook to delve into the dream world of five office workers, and have this world peel backwards through time to the wonderful fantasies of childhood. The office boy, Myron Curtis, was charming in a "first love" duet with Jill Taft, who has that incandescent quality of utter belief in a role which transcends all other matters at the moment. Marian Horokso gave a marvelously funny Bronx telephone operator characterization, which later developed even more depth as she receded into childhood's dreams. Judith Chazin evoked real pathos in her solo depicting a child in a rainstorm. On the lighter side Edilio Ferraro was delightful as the boss and later as the tomboy. The whole work was a bold venture but one which worked and one for which a bit of judicious cutting would pull into a first rate choreographic effort.

Mr. Gordon's *Minstrels*, previously reviewed in these columns, was again pleasantly received. Interesting recasting in certain roles was noteworthy. Thelma Hill as the "Mad Madonna" brought a new depth of characterization not yet seen in the part. William Earl also added luster to the role of the dandy in "The Wooing." The other excellent performers included Flo Peters, Jill Taft, George Feeney and Edilio Ferraro and Pat Walker.

Guest artist Ron Murray presented two highly polished works on the program. They were both very much "after the Bolshoi" and in this reviewer's opinion equally as good. In his pas de deux he performed with his partner, Joan Wilder, lifts and acrobatic air work quite comparable to the *Spring Waters* of the Bolshoi, which so startled the dance world here a short time ago. The same style elements, as well as the same influences, were true of Mr. Murray's more extended work, *Three Secrets*. In this ballet Mr. Murray, Kath-

)ear Editor:

I feel obligated to answer Ursula Mur-ıy's letter in Nov. Dance Digset taking ıe to task.

First, I dislike airing local problems ın a national scale. Miss Murray would ot be expected to know all the func-ions of the 2nd administration. When I rote the letter to your magazine I was ımmediate past president and on the oard of directors of the Associated)ancing Teachers of Southern California. Iowever, the current president took of-ice before the publication of my letter ı your October issue.

Former DMA, Club-1 president, Ray .eslie did authorize me to order 300 opies of the 12-page supplement on ecreation which exposes the 7-years uffering by private dance schools be-ause of the tax supported Recreation)epartment's Free and Give-away dance essons in the parks and public school uildings.

To tell you the truth, I personally paid or the Supplements titled "Recreation)epartments VS Private Dance Schools." ıt present I am a National Chairman of he Dance Masters of America on the ecreation Department Survey. Inciden-ılly, we have recevied many favorable omments from dance teachers through-ut the nation who have heard what the)MA is doing to help combat the alarm-ıg growth of the Recreation Department ance teaching activities.

All Dance Masters of America members ıay follow our plans as submitted by our ommittee at the last Board of Directors ıeeting at the National Convention held his past year in Miami Beach, Florida. 'or complete details read the committee's wo reports on this subject.

Thank you for allowing me to explain ıy last letter which appeared in your)ctober issue.

Yours truly,

CHARLEY BAKER

DMA National
Chairman on Recreation
Dept. Survey.

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LET'S FACE IT

By Lyn Dellis

I love all the dances
But the one thing I fear
When dancing the rhumba
Is the view from the rear.

erine Horn and Joan Wilder were excellent.

The lighting for the entire program was under the creative care of the expert, Nicola Cernovitch.

DANCE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

You are welcome to send news of Your Association to this Column

DANCE MASTERS of OHIO DMA Club No. 16 held its fall meeting Oct. 16th at the Sheraton Cleveland Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. Faculty included Gene Rollins, Buster Cooper and Mel Smith. Highlight of the day was "LaRue Hope Day" in honor of her many years of loyalty and service to DMO and DMA. In thirty years LaRue missed only two DMO meetings. The first meeting of the new year will be on February 19th at the Pick Ohio Hotel in Youngstown, Ohio. Our heartfelt sympathy to Marie E. Miller's family. Marie passed away Nov. 23, 1960.

CHICAGO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of DANCE MASTERS held a two day Holiday Ballroom Session a tthe Morrison Hotel in Chicago, Dec. 27-28. Faculty included: Grace V. Hansen, Swing; Ronald F. Dodd, International Style Waltz; Byrnes and Swanson, Contest Rumba; Bill de Formato, Advanced Tango; Gus Giordano, Les Jazz-Teenage Circle and Couple Dance; Gene Norman, Merengue; Florence S. Young, Teenage Jr. Ballroom Cotillion and Charles Mattison, Combinations - Harvest Moon. An Informal Discussion followed the material sessions. BULLETIN NOTE: Future dates to remember: Feb. 5, 1961, Material Session at the Sheraton Towers; April 9th, Material Session at the Sheraton Towers. First Summer Session, Aug 1-5; 2nd Summer Session, Aug. 6-10th; Aug. 11-12th, 2-day Ballroom Session and Aug. 13th thru 17th Convention.

DANCE MASTERS of AMERICA, Club 13 held an Informal Dance Social and Dinner at the home of Imogene Woodruff, Nov. 27th. BULLETIN NOTE: And that gal can cook like she can dance—and that's great.

SO. TEXAS ASSOCIATION of DANCE TEACHERS, DMA Club 3 held a Work Session Dec. 4th at the Rice Hotel in Houston, Texas. John Hart of the Royal Ballet was guest instructor. A luncheon followed the Session with the following teachers from Houston acting as Hostesses: Vivian King Adams, Patsy Swayze, Dolores Theofilu, Emmamae Horn, Mary Margaret Niland, Dorothy E. Taylor, Ann Keene, Lillian LuPau, Jerrel Berry, LaDelle Stevens, Deirdre Whitney, Mary Jo Gammill, Dorothy W. Graves, Betty R. Broussard. The annual convention is scheduled for February 3-4-5, 1961, Rice Hotel, Houston, Texas.

DMA, Oklahoma Chapter held a Material Session Nov. 13th at the Kotche School of Ballroom Dancing in Oklahoma City, Okla. Faculty included: Audrey Pine, Tap & Baton; Va. Wilson, Modern Jazz; Frances Blecker, Ballet and Jay Morse, Ballet.

BALLET TEACHERS – ASSISTANTS—AND STUDENTS—NOTE—BALLET is being added to the Tri State Music Festival held in Enid Oklahoma each spring. Students and teachers who are interested should contact their Local High School Music Director or Phillips University Tri State Music Festival at Enid, Oklahoma.

COMING EVENTS – OKLA CHAPTERS FOURTH STATE CONVENTION – TULSA – MARCH 1961.

If you are not already a member of the OKLAHOMA CHAPTER OF

LESTER HORTON SCHOOL TO CLOSE DOORS

The Lester Horton Dance Theater and School will close its doors as of the end of this year, after almost 15 years as a leading center of modern dance in the nation.

Since the death of its founder, the late Lester Horton, Nov. 2, 1953, the theater, school and dance company has been under the direction of former newspaperman Frank Eng.

Financial difficulties were cited as the reason for the closing, although Eng is retaining all rights to the Horton name, choreographies and dance techniques.

Meanwhile, Don Martin, principal Horton dancer, choreographer and teacher, will continue authorized to teach Horton techniques at a place to be announced.

Closing marks the end of an era for the little theater where some six seasosn of modern dance repertory were produced during Horton's latter years and four under Eng's aegis after his death, the most recent being "Choreo '58."

The Horton Theater produced such noted dancers as Bella Lewitzky, James Mitchell, Carmen de Lavallade, Lelia Goldoni, Misaye Kawasumi, Joyce Trisler and the last trio of top performers associated with the theater—Yvonne de Lavallade, James Truitte and Martin. Other dancers--instructors include Joan Kerr, Ada Agnew, Masako Endo and Jack Hill, recently drafted into the service.

DMFOA, YOU are invited to join. By joining the Oklahoma Chapter you automatically become a member of DANCE MASTERS OF AMERICA, FOUNDED 76 YEARS AGO.

DMA Chapter 29 held an All-Day Material Session Nov. 6th at the Davenport Hotel. Guest instructor was Mary Kasi. BULLETIN NOTE: DMA National Secretary, Leroy H. Thayer, honored our Club with a visit on Oct. 6, 1960. His help was invaluable to us in planning our next year's schedule. A number of studios presented their dancers in a review for Mr. Thayer.

• Leticia Jay is supervising the stylization of the actors in Tagore's "The King of the Dark Chamber." This is an off-Broadway production, directed by Krishna Shah, produced by Newhall & Van Joyce.

The cast starts coaching today with Miss Jay. Traditional Indian gestures are being used in the staging of the play, but will be, of course, adapted to practical usage for the mixed cast of Indians and Americans, who are actors and not dancers.

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Ruth St. Denis, acknowledged First Lady of American dance, has been selected to receive the 1961 Capezio Dance Award, an annual national honor with a $1000 grant.

Pictured currently above, she rounds out 65 years as a professional dancer dance innovator and teacher with her directorship of a new study program at Adelphi College, Garden City, Long Island, called "Worship and the Arts."

RUTH ST. DENIS NAMED FOR TENTH ANNUAL CAPEZIO DANCE AWARD

Ruth St. Denis, acknowledged First Lady of American Dance, has been selected to receive the 1961 Capezio Dance Award.

It is appropriate that "Miss Ruth," as she is known affectionately in the dance world, signals the tenth year this dance honor with its $1000 grant has been awarded. The award will be made at a luncheon in January.

The citation by the Committee for the Award states: "To Ruth St. Denis, a professional dancer for more than 65 years, as she approaches the 55th anniversary of her historic debut as a theater-dance innovator, for her continuing service to the dance in America, as the source from which so many theater forms and so many dancers have sprung, as an inspiration to those who would adventure as she has done and as a symbol, respected abroad and loved at home, of unflagging and enthusiastic dedication to dance whether it is found in a vaudeville house or concert hall, in the theater or in church."

Currently, Miss St. Denis heads a new study program which she helped develop at Adelphi College, Garden City, Long Island, called " Worship and the Arts," and conducts dance classes with emphasis on the role of the dance through all religions. In January, she will conduct a seminar for ecclesiastical leaders and lay church directors on incorporating rhythmic choirs in devotional activities.

Dance history was made by Ruth St. Denis when she helped found, as partner, the Denishawn Dancers in 1914. Both as a school and performing group, the organization had profound influence on American and international dance. She has been continually performing and teaching through the years, with regular appearances at Jacob's Pillow, in Lee, Massachusetts.

The Committee for the Capezio Dance Award is comprised of Anatole Chujoy, editor and critic, Dance News; Emily Coleman, dance editor and critic, Newsweek; Martha Hill, Director of Dance Department, Juilliard School of Music; Walter Terry, dance editor and critic, New York Herald Tribune.

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